

It's here - Choose sides...



Cracking the Liberty Bell

A Novel by ...

J.J. Johnson

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1

The Call to Worship

The cold front that moved through Central Ohio that morning caused a phenomenon called "black ice." Although there wasn't any snowfall and most of the interstate and major thoroughfares were salted, there were a few more traffic accidents than one would expect on a Sunday morning. In all, it was typical January weather in Columbus, Ohio.

After chopping the next quarter cord of firewood for the wood-burning stove, Christopher Magnum headed for his office inside Liberty Bell Baptist Church. As he entered the back door from his parsonage in the rear, he passed his disabled school bus. There he was met by his most senior schoolteacher.

"Good mornin', Pastor," said the woman with a strong Appalachian accent. She had taught young girls about the Bible and womanhood at the Baptist church every Sunday morning since it opened 17 years ago.

Carrie Ann Stockman, age 55, was the most feared and respected woman at Liberty Baptist. When the church first opened, Carrie was in charge of the nursery area. But as the church grew, so did her duties. She ran the Sunday school, the nursery, and the mid-wife classes with a conservative, fundamentalist iron fist. Most of the "Sisters" who attended referred to her as "Mother Liberty," but never to her face.

Throughout the years, her hard-core Christian values never changed with the times. She was a woman who watched over the "flock" and the Church itself like a sentinel. Some jokingly said that the Rock of Foundation that Liberty Baptist was built on was so solid because they used part of Sister Carrie's attitude when mixing the concrete. When Carrie wasn't sittin' for a spell with Sister Pauline, Magnum's wife, she could be found cleaning, teaching, praying, washing, or pointing at someone else to do likewise on the church property.

She only took orders from the two people she respected the most - Christopher Magnum, Sr. and his wife Pauline, her best friend. Carrie's conservative way of life was challenged when she was personally threatened with a lawsuit over washing a 10 year-old's mouth out with soap about a year ago. The matter was dropped after a Pastor's meeting with Carrie and the child's parents. When young Jason Browning repeated his statement that Carrie Stockman was a "stuffy, old, gray-haired bitch" and Pastor Magnum was a "male chauvinist pig," Carrie blamed the child's behavior on his upbringing'.

"Morning, Sister Stockman," said Magnum, as he kicked the salt off his work boots. "Remind me to thank who ever took care of these walkways, Sister."

"Yes, is was kinda rough gettin' in this morning, Brother."

"Well, the road looks clear in front. Traffic seems to be movin' on High Street. Don't worry, Sister, they'll be here."

"I don't know, Pastor. The city streets are okay, but I heard about a buncha car wrecks comin' in this mornin'. Got a few Sisters missin'. Most from outta town though."

"Have you seen the Sunday paper yet?" the aging pastor grumbled as he strolled through the foyer to his private office.

"Read the one on your desk," said Carrie.

"I guess you'll be bringin' this up in the sermon."

"Reckon I'd better," said Magnum.

"Truck's are warming up, sir!" the junior officer said to his commander. Patrick Beavers, the Columbus Police SWAT team coordinator knew he would have his hands full that day. As he went over last-minute details with the Franklin County sheriff's deputies, he wondered why so many officers were needed just to serve a warrant. More senior field officers began filing into Columbus Police Academy where the SWAT contingency planning took place.

"Guess we get to earn our money today, Commander," said Deputy Rollins. Beavers took a sip from his coffee, raising his eyebrows as he flipped through several pages of a duty roster.

"Are you sure we need all this manpower for the perimeter, Rollins?"

"Didn't you see the Dispatch this morning, Pat?"

Beavers had been so busy in the police academy warehouse checking out tactical gear for his men that he didn't have time to read the front page of the Columbus Dispatch, Central Ohio's leading newspaper. He wore a black Columbus Police jacket which read "SWAT" on the back over his bullet-proof vest. His black cap, carrying the Columbus P.D. logo, covered his grayish crew cut. Beavers looked more like a hardened soldier than a police officer.

"I guess the rules of engagement have changed on this one, Commander."

"With everyone on hazardous duty pay, they'd better change. You guys wearing vests too?" Beavers asked.

"Mandatory. The big boys are callin' the shots on this one. At least we don't have to bring any gas masks."

"Damn feds. I hate doin' their dirty work. My people are ready. What about you?"

"On the road in twenty minutes, Commander. Leaving at 0930 as scheduled."

Pastor Magnum shoved the stack of unanswered correspondence from the Internal Revenue Service to the side of his desk to prepare for the morning's sermon. A normal day started with a review from his worn, torn, old Bible passed down from four generations. With the fervor over the performance of the OSU Buckeyes in the Rose Bowl and the NFL playoffs in full swing, the day's sermon was to be about "Bread and Circuses, and the paganism of Rome."

But this morning; this *day* would be different. The pastor couldn't keep his mind or his eyes off of page one of the Columbus Dispatch. Today's top story: An expose of the Liberty Bell Baptist Church which included a 4" x 5" color photograph of the plain-dressed Man of God under the bold headline:

EVANGELIST OR EXTREMIST?

For over a decade and a half, Christopher Magnum preached the gospel of Jesus Christ at the Liberty Bell Baptist Church, which he had built from the ground up. He also preached against the New World Order. His church was one of several in the country that were not registered with the IRS, and therefore not considered a church by the government. In the past, he had hosted numerous speakers from all over the country and held seminars on topics ranging from alternative medicine, home schooling, God & Government, Common Law,

militia, self-reliance, organic farming, ammunition reloading, and several seminars on how to avoid paying taxes...legally. He was best known for preaching what he called "the uncensored truth."

The son of a Baptist preacher, Magnum did not find Jesus Christ on his own. Magnum had been called one of those "anti-government extremists" by many. But to most around him, he was called an American Patriot. In fact, Magnum was one of the most well known Patriots in Ohio. His hard-hitting style of preaching, organizational skills, and leadership qualities made him one of the most respected among his peers. This also made him a target - courtesy of the U.S. Government.

With all the different factions in the various branches of the patriot movement, the one belief they had in common was mistrust toward government and unfortunately, each other. But Pastor Magnum was above the infighting among patriots and would not tolerate it in his church. The "tribalism," as it was called, was at its worst among several groups of the "Ohio Citizen's Militia." This had never affected the ministry of Pastor Magnum... until this day.

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-b

The Call to Worship

As Vicky Goldstein left her apartment in Delaware, a city about 20 miles north of Columbus, she remembered to tune the radio in her navy blue Ford Taurus to the local Columbus AM station that carried the Sunday morning talk show. As she traveled south on U.S. 23 she lost the Delaware station.

Her destination was the Peoples' Rights Association Gun Show in Circleville Ohio, south of Columbus. Her mission: To replace a defective pair of binoculars, find hollow-point ammo for her SIG Sauer 9mm and one extra magazine. After an assault on one of her co-workers in the parking lot of the Delaware Medical Center, Vicky's father feared for her safety since she often left the medical center at night.

The talk show was abuzz with talk about the morning headlines in the Dispatch. Vicky had not read them but she knew some of the allegations could not be correct. Not only had Vicky attended a few of the services at the Liberty Bell Baptist Church, she also went to a few patriot and local militia meetings the year before with her boyfriend. The constant fighting between different militia groups caused the 36 year-old nurse to focus more on self-survival. The weekly visits with her parents made "patriotism" a sore subject. At the Goldsteins' home, the fights were even worse.

Ira Goldstein was an American businessman who had worked in Hitler's Germany in the mid-thirties. He witnessed how the German press had manipulated the truth and subsequently slaughtered many of his family and friends. He barely escaped a railcar to the death camps. Ira Goldstein had to shoot his way out.

Ira believed that the only way to fend off "right-wing, anti-Semitic wackos" was through superior firepower. "Every Jew should be armed," he often said. When arguing with his wife he would say, "Our people were disarmed before they went to the gas chambers. If a little Jewish girl would have had just one gun, maybe you'd still have a mother!"

His wife, Karen was a different story. She had been supporting the Anti-Defamation League for years, and had read virtually all of the literature she had ever been sent. In Karen's opinion, only the military should own firearms. Not even police. Anyone who supported the Second Amendment or talked about the "New World Order" did so only to hide behind their racist, anti-Semitism she believed. Political arguments were common on Saturdays at the Goldsteins' household. That's why Vicky never told Mom about the little present Dad gave her.

That was also why Vicky did not attend patriot or militia meetings anymore.

At about 10:20 am, as Vicky drove past a carry-out store on High Street and Powell Road, about two miles north of the Liberty Bell Baptist Church, she heard a familiar voice on the radio. "Our next caller is Karen from Delaware," said the host. Karen immediately began to character assassinate Pastor Magnum and virtually anyone who ever attended the north side Baptist church. Vicky almost lost control of her car when her mother's conversation turned into exaggeration.

"...in fact, I had to go and rescue my daughter from those Nazis about a year ago!" Karen said.

"No kidding?" said Sam Winchester, talk show host of the 50 kilowatt AM radio station, WTVX. "I guess there's more to this story than what we know," he added.

"THAT'S IT!" Vicky yelled as she passed the electric substation at Lazelle Road. She pulled her cell phone out of her purse and angrily said, "The last thing I need is to be embarrassed in front of 2 million people." She tried dialing twice but couldn't get a signal. *Hmmm, must be in a bad cell*, Vicky thought. But she did not notice that she had just passed a cellular tower about 10 feet from the road.

Determined to give her mother a piece of her mind, and realizing that she had not seen the article yet, Vicky drove into the parking lot of a Bob Evans restaurant across the six-lane street from Liberty Bell Baptist. She knew there were two pay phones, Sunday papers and yes, coffee. A nearly full parking lot forced her to park two lots away, in the rear.

After swinging open the front door of the restaurant, she grabbed a paper from a vending machine and looked toward the phones. "Damn," she said. "Both in use." Fortunately, Vicky observed, most of the restaurant was occupied with smokers. It should be easy to find a seat, and she hadn't had breakfast. She pulled off her red winter coat.

"Welcome to Bob Evans!" the young hostess greeted her. "Do you have a smoking preference?"

"Non-smoking, please."

"This place is like a ghost town today," said Jay Preston.

"We've only been open for an hour, and besides, who the hell's gonna come to a gun show with icy roads?" Kevin Nelson responded as he spat tobacco into his cup.

Both were working the vendor table of "Citizens Action Network" (C.A.N.) at the Peoples' Rights Association Gun Show in Circleville. The patriot group that Preston and his wife Anita had founded also produced a monthly newsletter bearing the same name. The constitutionalist group in Columbus had been labeled "right-wing extremist" by many.

As with most other weekend gun shows, Preston and friends sold newsletter subscriptions, videos and small pamphlets to maintain the group's operating expenses. Most of the information was militia related. This is why Jay Preston was best known as the public contact for the Ohio Citizens Militia and had spoken on behalf of the militia around the country. His critics around the country claimed that the only reason Preston was known nationally was the fact that he was black and they claimed he was used as a token to hide the militia movement's "true white-supremacist" leanings.

Preston was dressed for the weather in a conservative black turtleneck with a sky blue jacket over it. His short haircut brought his height down to about 6' 3". He was much slimmer than his partner, Nelson, whose stocky figure put him at about 5' 8". Nelson maintained his crewcut and his five o'clock shadow. He was dressed in his normal attire -- black and white urban camouflage pants and a pro-second amendment T-shirt. Today's shirt read on the back, "People who believe in gun control should not own guns."

"We made it here," said Jay.

"Only because you're driving on illegal snow tires," Kevin replied.

"Well, they weren't illegal when I bought 'em."

"That's no excuse, and don't change the subject. The fact is, it's only 10:30, and people are here. You're trying to pedal this militia bullshit to the same crowd. Face it, Preston, the militia movement is D-E-A-D."

"People still care about the country. People still care about losing their rights."

"People only care about themselves. All those militia men in jail around the country caused most groups to either go underground or totally disband."

"Not in Ohio. And what about Michigan?" Jay asked.

"OHIO! Are you kidding???" Kevin replied jokingly. "What's left of the units in this state won't even talk to each other, and most won't talk to you. Why bother to recruit anyone else, Jay?"

"If it's no use, then why are you here?"

"I'm trying to sell my .300 Winchester, you idiot!"

"That is not a toy!" said Belinda Browning, scolding her oldest son.

"Gee mom, it's empty!" the freckled eleven-year-old replied.

"Give me that! And get your butts in church!" Belinda gave her youngest son's hand to the older, eleven-year-old as all three of her children walked through the south rear hallway doors into the Liberty Bell Baptist Church.

Several hidden people outside took notice of the 120 pound, 5 foot, 4 inch mother of three. Her long, bleached-blond hair was somewhat frizzy and could have used a good grooming. She was built slim, and the bright, blue eyes accented her twenty-ish face, which hid the fact that she was 34. Her attractive figure was concealed in paramilitary clothing that insulted her good looks.

Camouflage pants and a tight black shirt covered with a wrinkled olive drab winter coat was not exactly the typical 'Sunday-go-to-church' attire, but one look at the dirty military boots with pants tucked inside made any observer forget about the rest.

Belinda never had to tell anyone she was in a militia group. She looked the part. Not just in her clothing, but in her behavior. Evidence of this fact were her 3 children, Jason (age 11), Susan (age 8) and William (age 7) whose childish pranks caused fear in even most adults, let alone other children.

Much of that was a result of Belinda's rough, blue-collar childhood and even rougher adult life. But still, she was well-educated. Her common sense and knowledge of the law prevented anyone from calling her a dumb blonde. It was agreed by the Browning family that problems in her life, along with her three ill-behaved, little hellraisers could be tamed by her entire family becoming regulars at Liberty Baptist. There, Sam Browning and family found many people who at least thought like they did.

What caught the most attention this morning (both outside and inside the church) was that Belinda Browning had just snatched her Colt AR-15 from her son's hands. He was pointing the empty weapon at his little sister who was carrying the ammo bag.

Belinda stopped before entering with the rifle slung over her shoulder, remembering that her husband Sam told her to lock the car. Forget it, she thought, since Belinda was one of the regulars whose family often did volunteer work at the church. She was among friends - she thought.

As she noticed the increased security in the hallway, she turned to one of the ushers and asked, "What's the big deal, guys?" The stocky usher did not answer, but his eyes turned to the left as he cleared his throat.

"Excuse me, Sister Browning. You're late." Belinda turned to see Carrie Stockman standing over her, as if the gray-haired Sunday school teacher was looking right through her. Carrie used her condescending voice.

"Ah... Morning, Sister Carrie, and I'm not late. It's only 10:45 and service isn't until-" Carrie cut her off.

"Sunday school starts at 9:30. All three of your children could use a Godly upbringing'. And how many times have we told you not to bring guns into the church in open view? As if we don't have enough problems already!"

"Oops!" Belinda whispered. She tried to keep the confrontation quiet since others were fellowshiping in the hall. "Look Sis, the Pastor supports the Second Amendment and doesn't mind us bringing guns in here. Besides, there's a problem with this one and I need someone to look at it...."

Carrie cut her off again. "That's *Sister. Not Sis!* And you have no business bringin' all this ammo in here! There are laws in this state. But of course, *you* and your ilk don't recognize laws, do you?"

"It's only two...."

"Where's your husband, Sister Browning?"

"Ahh... Bread & circuses?" Belinda said squeamishly, hoping not to get scolded again.

"He's backsliding, isn't he?" Belinda began to lose her patience.

"Yes Carrie, he's *backsliding* again, in fact, it's the annual *backsliding* play-off season. And after the Super *backsliding* Bowl, he'll be back! Now if your done...."

"I'm not. Pastor Magnum has been asking about the church school bus. Wasn't your husband supposed to be working on that yesterday?"

"It's fixed. He's just needs a starter to get that piece of junk moving."

"It is not a piece of junk! Oh... go mind your youngins." Carrie turned and headed toward the music inside the sanctuary.

"It *is* piece of junk," Belinda whispered as she mingled through the crowd looking for the right usher. She found him sitting at a literature table. In front of the table, she noticed a woman who looked somewhat familiar. *Where have I seen her before?* she asked herself as she looked at the 5' 8" middle-aged woman with grayish, curly hair that looked like an Afro from a distance. Standing next to the woman, who was wearing a gray vest over a red blouse with blue slacks, stood a 6' 4" attractive, Hispanic man holding a small bag. Belinda noticed that the two were taking a sample of each piece of literature on the table while giggling quietly to each other. Then the Hispanic man asked the man sitting at the table where the nearest payphone was. He was pointed in the right direction, then he and his female partner walked away just as Belinda approached.

"Hey, Brother Joe!"

"Hey, Sister Belinda. Shouldn't you be in with your kids?"

"Oh, they'll be fine. So who's the new fed around here?" Belinda looked towards the pay phone.

"I think they're media. I hear she's national."

"I thought she looked familiar. Anyway, I got a problem."

"The AR-15 I'd guess. What's the problem this time?"

"I was out at the range yesterday with these two magazines. I fired off about 10 rounds and...." Belinda paused.

"And..." Joe asked.

Belinda crouched down so no one else in the hall could hear. "The darn thing went full auto!" she whispered.

"I'll look at it," Joe continued, "By the way, I overheard the conversation. Sister Carrie's all bent out of shape over the article in the paper this morning. She's a patriot all right, but thinks we militia folk are givin' the church a bad name."

"But we didn't do anything. We're legal." Belinda replied.

"I know, I know. But you know the press ever since Oklahoma City."

"Yeah, I know. I don't think Sister Media over there is going to do us any favors."

"Tell ya what, Sister, gun safety and reloading class is tomorrow, downstairs. I'll have it fixed by then. Now go get your Godly upbringing'."

"Very funny," said Belinda.

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-c

The Call to Worship

AO 93 (Rev. 6/92) Search Warrant -- United States District Court
DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN OHIO

In the Matter of the Search of (name address or brief description of
person, property or premises to be searched)

Property at 7501 North High St. Columbus Franklin County, Ohio CASE NUMBER:
1: 97M03 26338

TO: Gregory Stevens, Special Agent, Internal Revenue Service, and any
Authorized Officer of the United States

Affidavit(s) having been made before me by Gregory Stevens who has reason
to believe that:

On the person of or on the premises known as (name, description and/or
location) The acreage owned and possessed by Christopher Robert Magnum
located at 7501 North High Street, Columbus Franklin County, Ohio, upon
which there is located a two-story brick-framed structure, red in color
with a tin roof, located on south side of Campus View Rd, 1.3 miles east of
Oh. Rt. 315 (Stafford Rd), 30 yards north of Interstate 270, Columbus Ohio,
and including the interior of said dwelling In the Southern District of
Ohio there is now concealed a certain person or property, namely (describe
the person or property to be seized)

Financial Documents, and IRS correspondence and membership records,
evidence of tax evasion

I am satisfied that the affidavit(s) and any recorded testimony establish
probable cause to believe that the person or property so described is now
concealed on the person or premises above-described and establish grounds
for the issuance of this warrant.

YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to search on or before January 9 (not to exceed 10
days) the person or place named above for the person or property specified,
serving this warrant and making the search at any time in the day or night
as I find reasonable cause has been established and if the person or
property be found there to seize same, leaving a copy of this warrant and
receipt for the person or property taken and prepare a written inventory of
the person or property seized and promptly return this warrant to

Peter L Cohen - Federal Circuit Judge

Peter R. Cohen

Signature appears here as required by law.

"Dispatch to SWAT COM - Dispatch to SWAT COM..." Upon leaving the police academy, Commander Beavers headed north on I-270 to join his team members in his unmarked cruiser. He grabbed his microphone.

"Beavers here."

"Commander, I have an urgent message from Treasury."

"Let's have it."

"Their case agent has some papers for you. You need to stop by the Budget Inn at Tuttle Crossing. He's waiting for you."

"Dispatch, uh...can we do this later? We're kinda busy."

"Sorry. Orders from Treasury per City Hall."

"Copy. SWAT COM out."

"Now what?" Beavers said to himself. Patrick Beavers notified his field commanders of the delay. He took the Tuttle Road exit off the northwest section of I-270 and found a dark-haired man in a leather jacket waiting in front of the hotel. Badges and ID were shown.

"Pat Beavers? Greg Stevens, IRS. How ya doin'?"

"Hop in. It's already 10:45. Now what's this about?"

"First of all, I wanted to give you a copy of this."

"The warrant, huh? I was wondering when I was going to see this." Beavers and his passenger headed north on I-270.

"There may be a small change in procedure."

"Forget it. I am not serving this warrant. It's out of my jurisdiction. You guys are supposed to be doing that."

"We are, but something's come up. We got a man from the Bureau inside. He's saying there might be a few more guns than we thought."

"Look, Stevens, I was told to back your guys up in case he wouldn't come out willingly. Now you're telling me you've got an FBI agent inside worried about guns? I thought this whole mess was about taxes!"

"Commander, the man inside is an informant. He's not with Justice, he's working for Treasury and-"

"ATF?"

"That's right. I guess they've been conducting their own investigation. And since this guy's known to hang out with those militia nuts, somebody up the chain's concerned. You wouldn't have a problem if they served this warrant, would you?"

Beaver paused. "Don't tell me I'm going to have to work with 'Mr. Product-of-Affirmative-Action' again."

"Special Agent Ron Gillette is in charge of the entire Columbus Division. Yes, he's black, but he is more than capable of handling his end. Please don't let his skin color affect your judgment. Be more tolerant." The squad car was approaching the Route 315 exit on I-270, about a mile from U.S. Rt. 23.

"Look, every time I have to deal with Gillette, I get the sheriff in my face about jurisdiction. Johnson already warned you folks about this."

"Collecting federal taxes is federal jurisdiction. Gillette knows the rules of engagement policy. You've even got some deputies with you to keep everyone clean, I hear. The Sheriff had to sign off on that."

"I don't want another mess like those guys had in Texas back in '93. These Nazis in Ohio are crazy, but they're not stupid. Hell, that's why we got our counter-ops working already."

"Don't worry. They've got their own guys on the scene. You just back them up. We got a press blackout on this. We'll be in and out before anyone knows we're there."

"And what if they find illegal weapons, Greg?"

"That'll be another feather in your cap, sir."

"Hmmm. Sir", Beavers thought. He began to wonder if that was the plan all along.

"CAN-DO! Anita Preston. May I help you?" Anita put her phone on speaker.

"Hi, this is Gloria McKnight with NBC News. I'm trying to reach The Citizens' Action Network militia group. What is CAN-DO?"

"Citizens' Action Network -- Distribution Office. But we're not a militia group per se. How can I help you?" Anita spoke with a very slight Mexican accent.

"Hi, Anita. Are you the one who has the newsletter and the internet website?"

"That's right. Working on the February edition right now. Say, are you the national correspondent who's been trashing the patriot movement on NBC?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that. We're doing a *documentary* on militias and religion. I was wondering if I could speak to your husband, Jay Preston, for an interview."

"I'm sorry. He's not in right now."

"Would he be at the gun show down in Circleville?"

"Excuse me, but how did you know that?"

"I'm here in town at the Liberty Bell Baptist Church with my cameraman. I'll be talking to the Pastor after service, and we were told where your husband might be."

"You actually got an interview with Pastor Magnum? Yeah, right. He doesn't *grant* interviews. Especially after what the paper did to him."

"We scheduled this interview some time ago. He's making me sit through one of his sermons before we can talk to him. Not on camera, though. Will Jay be home later?"

"He's in and out. The best way to reach him is by pager, but it's out of range in Circleville. Try later." Gloria wrote down Preston's pager number as she and Anita exchanged a few more words. She hung up the hallway pay phone.

"C'mon, it's time for the militia minister's show", Gloria said jokingly to her cameraman.

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-d

The Call to Worship

The fact that Pastor Christopher Magnum's Liberty Bell Baptist Church (commonly referred to as "Liberty Baptist") was an un-registered church is not what made it unique. His congregation was not as large as most denominational churches, but about half of his fellowship was not local. They traveled from all over Ohio every Sunday to hear his "fundamentalist", anti-government sermons, and offer volunteer duties. Most, if not all of the regular Sunday attendees, were strictly loyal to the Pastor and the church.

On this day, Terri Ralston would be in charge of the day care center, as she had been for two years. Terri worked as a registered nurse during the week, hosted a constitutional study group on Tuesday nights and traveled from Findlay, Ohio every Sunday for the toddlers including Christen, her own. She listened to the Pastor's sermon over the speaker in the nursery. Her assistants were Lisa Darling, a young, black libertarian from Columbus known for her short wit, and Kathy Dowden, a gun rights activist from Lorain, Ohio.

Terri's husband, Fred was among the stewards (read: security personnel) of Liberty Baptist. He and others watched out for picture-taking, and the "wrong kind of literature" being passed out at the church.

Chuck Noble, a transplant from Indiana, lived and worked in Columbus at a local electronics shop. After today's service, Chuck planned to see if he could salvage the pastor's CB radio base station. It had been hit by lightning back in October and had not worked since. He was in charge of the "covert" security during service and certain other events. He and his team sat in various places in the sanctuary looking for "people who might cause trouble." This Sunday's duties included keeping an eye on someone who was asking "too many questions" about security. He answered directly to Christopher Magnum Jr., known to everyone as "Junior."

Junior was in charge of church security. He followed in his father's footsteps. He was a military veteran of the Gulf War, in charge of a platoon of military police just as his father, who fought in Vietnam. He was a construction foreman during the day, but made most of his income with his favorite hobby, gunsmithing.

Unlike his father, Junior got an early tip on the scathing news article before it hit the streets and called up a few of his father's congregation for duty. Usually, about ten men showed up weekly for security at the doorways with concealed .45 or 9mm. sidearms.

Strange?

Consider this: Pastor Magnum had been described as an "intolerant, tax evading racist, extremist, fascist, homophobic, anti-Semitic hate-monger" who stockpiled weapons for the coming Revolution, and an "extremely dangerous individual" by his detractors. The press had taken the liberty of continually reporting this propaganda without asking the pastor for his comments. This morning's paper was a perfect example. It was reported that the police were "very concerned" about Magnum's activities.

Yet, Christopher Magnum had no criminal record whatsoever. No one had ever been denied entry into his church or home due to their religious or political beliefs. And in a low-crime community that had been zoned commercial in the last five years, Magnum's church had been vandalized 3 times and he could not have it insured. Radical, leftist groups had assaulted him. He had received nine death threats. These were some of the reasons for armed security at Liberty Baptist.

Junior's security men were professionals during the week. Those who volunteered had background checks done on them. Some were ex-military. They took their jobs seriously. Usually, they rotated from door security to sanctuary detail, but this Sunday there were extra volunteers. Twenty-four to be exact. All were told by Junior and his friend Richard Marshall to bring their "complete set of tools" to church this Sunday for "finishing work." That meant all were to be dressed formally, armed with handguns, and one semi-automatic rifle with 200 rounds of ammunition. Each rifle was to be close by but out of sight. "Better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it," the Magnums always said. No one ever complained about it because each man thought he was the only one that was "heavily" armed. None of them were part of any militia unit.

The building was built by the pastor, his family and his congregation - one piece at a time. The red brick, two-story structure could hold over 500 people in its main sanctuary and 200 in the balcony. The pastor insisted on using the balcony only if the sanctuary was full - which was rare.

The main entrance had two oak doors on the church's eastern face that opened up to the foyer, which had two stairways up to the balcony, one on each side. The main entrance was closed, however. Magnum kept those doors closed in the winter to keep the sanctuary heat in. Junior bolted them shut since they had no lock on them. The foyer had a doorway that led to the main sanctuary.

The sanctuary had a wooden floor with green, indoor carpeting on top. There were twenty rows of oak pews, with an aisle on each side, and a larger aisle running through the middle. The pews were donated by an old church that had been torn down. The walls of the sanctuary faced north and south, and contained projects from Carrie Stockman's Sunday school students from long ago: painted glass windows. They included familiar portraits of America's founding fathers: George Washington, Ben Franklin, Samuel Adams, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry among others.

The congregation faced west to the pulpit. The front row was separated from the pulpit by an open wooden divider five feet away. This divider surrounded the raised pulpit and created an area known as the front stage, which was where you would find Pastor Magnum's wife Pauline, faithfully at the piano on the south side, to her husband's right. The other side was used for other special events.

The pulpit contained a seat for the pastor and three additional seats on either side. When the pastor or any other speaker was at the podium, they stood in front of the unfinished choir stand whose top level was even with the balcony. Behind the choir stand, a huge mural of "The Last Supper" adorned the back wall.

The ceiling was made from aluminum and tin with wooden beams and cross sections made from two-by-fours bolted together. Jed Jarvis, a war buddy of the Pastor who supervised over the construction of the roof, died last year. Sometimes it got loud when it rained, but even though "Old Jed" built this roof with used material, it never leaked.

Every Fall, Old Jed would use his own special formula of silicone, tar and some smelly stuff to re-seal the roof joints. Last year he fell off during a windstorm. He died later in the hospital. His funeral had produced the highest attendance ever at Liberty Bell Baptist. That was when Vicky Goldstein had met the Preston family for the first time.

The ceiling was painted white, and lined with hundreds of white, outdoor Christmas lights along the beams. Cheap, but it worked. It spanned from the balcony, across the sanctuary and stopped at the choir stand.

At the front, or west end of the sanctuary, there were doors that led to the main rear hallway via an access hall on each side. On the north side access, there was a stairway leading to the basement. The north and south glass doors on each end of the main, rear hallway were where the parishioners entered from the parking lot on both sides of the building.

There were also stairs on both sides of the rear hallway. One stairway lead to the upper hallway and one to the basement. The rooms and offices from these two hallways were where most of the other business and activities of the church were conducted. This 12 foot-wide first floor hallway, called the "lobby," connected to the nursery

which was in the south rear of the building, and on the north, just past the entrance door, was the smaller hallway called the "back 40." The pastor's office, the church office, and the first floor Trustee's meeting room were located there.

The upstairs hallway also had a "back 40" hallway along with several rooms for the private church school during the week and Sunday school on the weekend. Also, there were two doors in the upstairs hallway that led to the upper deck of the choir stand. There were restrooms on all the floors.

Gun safety and reloading classes were in the basement, along with a kitchen, the utility area and emergency storage items. Although the furnace was in the basement, there was no heat there. It was all used for the upper floors.

Usually, one of the pastor's assistants handled the opening of the service, but the pastor chose to leave his office early and handle the entire service since he had heard there were several new faces in the congregation.

"11 o'clock? You're early today, sir," said Tom Denny, one of the "ushers" who guarded the north hallway door.

"Gee, how cold is it out there?" Magnum asked.

"29 degrees and falling, sir."

"Keep that door closed, brother." The Pastor continued walking into the hallway leading to the sanctuary.

11:00 am.

ATF Special Agent in Charge, Ron Gillette, gave the "GO" signal into his microphone.

"Copy. Lockin' the door..." The Columbus Police SWAT Commander replied from the staging area behind the Bob Evans restaurant.

On the SWAT COM's signal, two Ohio State Highway Patrol cruisers left their curbed positions heading west on I-270, then turned on their flashers and slowed down to enter the curb lane again. They both came to a gradual stop across the U.S. 23 north exit ramp, prohibiting access.

Simultaneously, two more state patrol cars moved into position on the eastbound lanes of I-270 to the U.S. 23 northbound exit of the huge, cloverleaf interchange.

City of Columbus construction vehicles occupying both lanes on U.S. 23 (High Street) made their way from Wilson Bridge Road, south of I-270, slowing down at the bridge over I-270 to allow the last few vehicles to make the curve that the eastbound state patrol vehicles had just cut off. Attached to the rear of the orange municipal construction trucks were yellow flashing arrows pointing to the right. They gradually slowed down to a complete stop just past the U.S. 23 northbound entrance of I-270 west.

The flow of northbound traffic in front of Liberty Bell Baptist Church stopped.

"Southgate's closed, SWAT COM."

"Northgate, GO!" Pat Beavers barked with authority.

A Columbus Police cruiser then approached the left hand turning lane of U.S. 23 (High Street) southbound to Campus View Dr. Instead of turning, the cruiser passed the thick, white line and stopped in the middle of the intersection under the traffic signal.

An officer jumped out of the car and began signaling the two lanes of westbound traffic on Campus View Dr. to make a northbound turn onto High Street. This forced all traffic in the left hand turning lane of Campus View to the right. This was now easy since there was no northbound traffic on High Street to merge into. This left only the southbound traffic on High Street (U.S. 23).

"All Units, All Units! Treasury has the ball. REPEAT: Treasury has the ball. SWAT COM out." Two armored SWAT trailers turned out of the staging area, left on Campus View Dr. into the left hand turning lane. The first trailer carried 25 local SWAT team members. The second was the SWAT Mobile Command Center. Beavers rode in his usual command chair in the rear of this trailer, but on this day, ATF SAC (Special Agent in Charge) Ron Gillette and Greg Stevens of the IRS were onboard looking over his shoulder.

Two vans then left the parking lot of Interpage Inc., the headquarters of a national, digital paging company, and headed south on U.S. 23 about 3/4 of a mile north of Liberty Baptist. Behind them was another armored SWAT trailer with 25 men. Behind the trailer were two police cruisers and three municipal construction trucks with arrows flashing left. This "armada" headed southward, gradually slowing down to Campus View Dr.

Near perfect timing allowed the two Chevy utility vans, one blue, the other tan, to continue slowly past Campus View Dr. on High Street just after the first armored SWAT trailer from the Campus View staging area made the left turn to High Street, toward Liberty Baptist. The SWAT trailer from Interpage, Inc. continued behind the two vans. The rest of the southbound fleet stopped at the intersection of High and Campus View while the SWAT command trailer made it's left turn to follow the task force to its intended target.

High Street was then closed between Campus View Dr. and I-270 in both directions. As the church bell rang in the tower on top of the church, signaling the Call to Worship, the only thing standing between the Joint Task Force and 161 men, women, and children inside the Liberty Bell Baptist Church... was about 15 seconds.

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-e

The Call to Worship

"Good morning, Americans. This is a little bit out of the norm but I chose to step to up to the mike early for several reasons. First, it's been a while since I've watched my lovely wife open up the service with music. Second, I'd like to welcome Ms. Gloria - I believe it's Gloria McKnight, isn't it?"

Sitting twelve rows back from the podium with her cameraman, Rauol Sanchez, Gloria McKnight showed an embarrassed smile.

"Ms. McKnight is here from NBC television to find out the truth about us patriots. She agreed to fellowship here today only if I granted her an interview later. Ma'am, today you will find out what this patriot movement is all about.

I'd also like to welcome back the Rogers family. Jimmie and Tanya have with them their newborn, Darla. I'm sure some of you will want to see one of God's latest masterpieces after service. They're over there to my left."

Jimmie Rogers, sitting on the edge of the ninth row next to his wife, raised his hand with pride. "Brother Rogers, is this your third?" Tanya held up two fingers. "Two. I'm sorry. Shannon, the other little one's in the nursery, right?" The Rogers both nodded in the affirmative. "Now, I don't wanna embarrass anyone else. So, for the rest of you who haven't been here for a while, welcome home.

I suppose a lot of you read the lies in the morning paper. And....I suppose a lot of you came to hear my side of the story. What you will hear today... is **GOD'S** side of the story!"

As Pastor Magnum began ripping the media along with the government and the Internal Revenue Service, Lisa Darling walked in from the nursery. Gloria noticed Lisa looking around the sanctuary and thought to herself, *Strange... for someone who is called a racist, he certainly has a number of blacks in here... And she even works here.*

Lisa walked up the north aisle of the sanctuary to Jimmie Rogers. She bent to one knee and whispered so as not to disturb the service. "Sorry to bother you, Brother Jimmie, but Sister Terri sent me out here because of a problem. We're all out of diapers in the nursery. You guys got any on you?"

"No problem." he leaned and whispered back. "Check the front seat of... Oh shoot! The car's locked. I'll just go get 'em and bring 'em in later, OK?"

"Okay, but several of the children need 'em, now."

"Right. I'm on my way." Lisa and Jimmie both walked out of the sanctuary to the main hallway. Lisa turned left toward the nursery and Jimmie turned right, toward the north parking lot.

The first SWAT trailer passed the church and took the U.S. 23 south entrance ramp down to I-270. It pulled over to the side about half way down the ramp. Fifteen of the twenty-five men came out of the back door. They had to traverse up a small, but steep grade to the guardrail that marked the southern border of the church's property line.

SWAT trailer #2 was parked on High St. just north of the church entrance. No one noticed the two Chevy vans pulling in to the driveway as Jimmie walked out the north door. They had noticed the SWAT trailer on High Street. One of the vans headed to the north parking lot, one headed to the south.

The mission was not that complicated. Secure the main hallway when service began, go into the pastor's study, secure the room and the pastor, and then... the two gun safes in his study. With the element of surprise on their side, the traffic interruption wouldn't last more than fifteen minutes, and extra SWAT teams probably wouldn't be needed. They had clear instructions not to touch or go into the sanctuary. No problem.

Wrong. Big Problem: The Pastor left early and security was doubled around his study.

Jimmie found his car - seventh one from the end and unlocked the door. The moment he bent down to grab the bag of diapers out of his car, two eight-man units for the ATF's Critical Response Team deployed from their vans at the eastern corner of the church. They kept their heads down and headed toward the main hallway door.

Jimmie grabbed the diapers and said, "Oops... better not leave this here!" His Ruger 9mm with a loaded magazine had been under the bag, so he started to place it under the seat when he heard the word:

"FREEZE!!!"

Without thinking Jimmie raised up with diapers in one hand, and a gun in the other, not realizing that those words came from an ATF field agent pumped with adrenaline and armed with an M-16.

Before Jimmie could even understand what was going on, he was dropped to the ground with two suppressed .223 rounds to his left shoulder. Diapers flew through the air.

Sitting between two parked cars, and holding his shoulder in pain, Jimmie's only thought was of protecting his wife and children inside. The ATF agent wasn't sure exactly where his target fell. This slowed his team down by about 1.5 seconds. They had to check between cars on their way to the main hallway.

Jimmie's shooter, Agent Paul Lang, found him two cars later... when Jimmie shot him from the ground with two rounds from his 9mm.

Paul Lang was wearing a vest. Jimmie Rogers wasn't. As Lang was falling back against the church wall, his second team member fired a three-round burst at the wounded parishioner. Two in the heart, one in the head.

The 25 year-old accountant, husband and father of two, became the first fatality of the Liberty Baptist Siege.

Still seated by the front window in Bob Evans restaurant, Vicky Goldstein had finished her breakfast. It was the newspaper article that kept shifting her mind... and her eyes toward Liberty Baptist across the street. She got a weird feeling after the traffic stopped, and the moment she saw the SWAT trailers she immediately grabbed her cell phone.

"Damn. Still not working." she said. Vicky looked around the restaurant until she noticed a man wearing a cell phone on his belt, sitting at a nearby table.

"Excuse me, sir" she asked calmly. "Is your cell phone working?"

He pulled it off his belt, pushed a few buttons and said, "Funny, I charged it this morning, but no signal. Ma'am... Uh... Ma'am?"

Vicky's eyes were at the window again when the men in black suits jumped out of the van. 'The pay phones!' she thought. Grabbing her purse, she hurried to the restaurant lobby. Since Vicky's parents were a toll call from the

restaurant, Vicky opened her wallet for her new phone card. She entered the access code, and looked back at the church, having a clear view of the north parking lot, and what she witnessed changed her life...forever.

"Forget calling Mom!" she said to herself, and began dialing a number from the business card that was tucked beneath her phone card.

"C'mon! Answer the phone, dammit!"

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-f

The Call to Worship

The ATF field units and the local police had just lost the element of surprise. But their anxiety kept them going forward. Tom Denny, hearing what he knew were gunshots, swung open the hallway door, his AK-47 in his left hand at the ready. His partner inside, chambered a round in his Mossberg pump shotgun.

Denny didn't have time to assess the situation. He saw several men with black suits, boots, helmets and rifles pointed in his direction. He squeezed off three 7.62 rounds before ATF field agents #1 and #3 both fired a pair of three round bursts at him.

The war was on.

The north glass doors exploded into splinters, throwing Tom Denny back with fatal wounds to the chest and arm. The field agents to the south then quickly moved toward the south hallway door.

As shots were reported to Junior, he picked up his hand-held radio.

"HOLD YOUR POSITIONS!!!"

Junior knew there was a natural tendency to move toward the battle, but he knew an attack of this sort wouldn't come from just one direction. As the south team secured the south doorway without firing a shot, their attention turned toward the other end of the hallway, where Tom Denny's partner, wounded and downed from broken glass, was moving back, firing his shotgun as he went.

Joe Baker was in the hallway behind a fallen literature table. He reached for his AR-15 but accidentally picked up Belinda Browning's rifle, slammed a magazine in, and put a round in the chamber.

Two more security men swung around the corner from the pastor's study to join the north door battle. Tom Denny and his partner lay dead in the doorway, along with three ATF agents. The battle for the main hallway was eight seconds old.

Seven of the eight agents at the south, entered with flash grenades as Joe Baker raised up from behind the table ready to fire.

"LOOK OUT!!!" one security man yelled to Joe. Joe turned south, his eyes wild. Startled by the flash grenade going off in front of him, he was hit in the right kidney by another three-round burst from the north...

The problem with Belinda Browning's rifle wasn't so much the gun, but the ammo. Her husband Sam had reloaded her .223 steel-core ammo with homemade powder that burned too hot. When fired, the round and the gases heated the receiver and the return-chamber, locking the firing pin.

The pain from an exploded kidney caused Joe's muscles to tighten - including his trigger finger. Before Joe fell forward to his death, twenty-four of thirty rounds left the AR-15 magazine heading south - toward the doorway. Six agents from the southern assault team were killed, and one was critically wounded.

As the security men drove the north team back with rifle fire, screams of panic could be heard from the nursery and the sanctuary...

"Anita Preston. May I help you?"

"I just saw somebody get gunned down! LISTEN! They just opened fire and gunned him down!"

"WHAT??? Who is this??" Anita heard the heavy breathing on the other end of the phone.

"I met you last year! You're the guys from the gun shows, right?"

"Yeah! Who is this? Where are you?"

"Oh my ... Shit! They're shooting at the church now!" Anita couldn't get a word in. "There're men with black ninja suits surrounding the church, and helicopters and guns! OH SHIT!!!"

"WAIT A MINUTE!!! WAIT!...Slow down!! Slow down. Now, who and where are you???"

"I'm across the street from Liberty Baptist!!"

"Stay on the line," Anita said as instant panic set in.

"Jessie kill that video game, and turn on the news." Anita's nine year-old son, Jessie reluctantly followed her directions as she began scanning local channels with the remote. "Nothing! Are you sure about this?" Anita asked.

"All hell's breaking loose up here, dammit!!"

"Okay! Okay! I believe you. Tell me what you're seeing!" Anita reached over and turned the radio to the local talk show station. She knew the news would be on soon. Then she turned on the tape recorder, which was connected to her desk phone.

"They're coming out of a truck now!! No, two trucks! They're all over the place!...Oh my GOD!!"

Using her shoulder to hold the phone to her ear, Anita closed down her word processor and loaded up a different software program.

"MAN DOWN!!! MAN DOWN!!!" The calls came into the SWAT command truck from both ATF teams. What was once a calm, cool, mobile command and control center had become a noise factory of confusion.

"HELP'S ON THE WAY!" yelled the field commander of SWAT trailer #1. He saw the build up of riflemen on the south side of the church. He and his men began laying down MP-5 fire over the south side of the church so he could get to the fallen ATF agents. Junior's men returned fire.

Meanwhile, Beavers gave the order for the 25 Men from SWAT trailer #2 to deploy after Jimmie Rogers went down. They were behind the rocks along the golf course north of the church. For the next ten seconds, the most helpless victims of the shoot-out were the cars in the north and south parking lots. The men laid down fire to allow the remaining ATF agents to retreat to positions of cover behind parked cars. They weren't successful.

Ten of the men from SWAT trailer #1 tried to take a flanking position behind the church. They were pinned down at the golf course.

"I'm calling Washington!" said Greg Stevens nervously.

"NO! PUT THAT DAMN PHONE DOWN!!" ATF SAC Gillette replied. He grabbed the mike from Beavers' hand.

"HEY!!" Beavers yelled.

"Birdman! Birdman! South side needs cover fire!" The SAC un-keyed the mike, looking at Beavers and asked "Can you cover the front??"

"Yeah, but my men are taking shots! We can't shoot into the sanctuary!"

"*They're* shooting at us. Move 'em in now. I'll cover this."

Birdman was in an old Bell helicopter, the type used in Vietnam. The pilot was Special Agent Brad Johnson. His gunner, Chuck Morgan had his feet out the door and was in control of a Browning .308 Gattling Gun, loaded with a belt of 1000 rounds of ammunition. Both were wearing headsets with microphones.

"Copy com. Tell the south side to keep their heads down! Pilot to Gunner... Get ready, Morgan... It's SHOWTIME!"

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-g

The Call to Worship

"...and our next caller is Ron from North Columbus. Ron, you're on the air."

"Hi, Sam. Hey, did you guys know there's a shoot-out going on up here?"

"Where's here?"

"I'm from out of town and I don't know the area too well, but I'm in a hotel, east of High Street on 270 and there are cop cars all over the place... I think someone's been shot."

Sam Winchester grabbed a post-it note in the studio while listening to the caller. He cut him off by saying, "Look pal, we get calls like this all the time. I certainly haven't heard anything about this and we *do* monitor the police. In fact, our traffic chopper is on the north end of town now and they haven't reported anything. The news room is saying that all is calm in Columbus..."

"I'm tellin' ya Sam, something's going on out here!"

"Hey, the WTVX newsroom has gotten awards for the last 4 years because of their outstanding coverage. Look pal, if there was something like that going on, we'd know about it! Hello...? Hello? ...I guess we lost him... On to the next caller..."

As Sam scolded his last caller, he wrote a note on a post-it and stuck it on the window, with the print facing the newsroom. All eyes in the newsroom widened as they read the message:

"THIS GUY SOUNDS FOR REAL! CHECK IT OUT!"

The increased panic inside the sanctuary grew proportionally with every gunshot. It stopped the Pastor in his speech. He spoke into the microphone....

"Folks, be calm. I'm sure the boys out there are on this!" He didn't know what else to say. His voice was drowned out by screams from men and women alike.

Chuck Noble suddenly came running down the middle aisle toward the pulpit yelling, "EVERYBODY DOWN ON THE FLOOR, NOW!"

Those who weren't trying to find their way out followed his instructions. Chuck's men had their ammo pouches on under their suits. Under every fourth church pew there was a semi-automatic rifle, and each man knew where his was.

"PASTOR, GET DOWN!!!" Chuck yelled. He radioed in to Junior. "JUNIOR, We see men...both sides...comin' up in front!"

"We're surrounded, Chuck! Cover my dad, hold your positions and keep them OUT of the church. CLEAR?"

"COPY! WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD'S GOING ON HERE??" Chuck ordered the men to take up positions at each window along the north and south sanctuary walls. Two men dove on Pastor Magnum for his protection.

"Get off me!!" yelled Magnum, as he reached for his trusty M-1 rifle concealed under his podium. Chuck's men instinctively started helping out the shooters in the hallway who were taking fire from SWAT teams on both sides.

The pastor stood up, raising his rifle up high with his left hand. He waved his hand as if to tell people to move back, but he was actually signaling the men in the balcony to take positions along the huge window behind the balcony. They did.

"CARS COMING IN FRONT!!!" came a voice from the balcony.

Automatic gunfire scorched the air through the open sanctuary windows. Two window men were down. The chaos intensified. Cars in the parking lots were now at the mercy of shooters on both sides.

Belinda kept her children down on the pew seats wondering what happened to Joe. She heard the familiar sound of her AR-15 in the hallway. On the other side of the sanctuary, Tanya Rogers held her newborn baby tightly as she stared into space. Tanya, the young mother of two was in a total state of shock. She began frantically calling for her dead husband.

The sanctuary aisles and pews were strewn with wounded parishioners. Broken glass, spent cartridges and trampled bodies made the church look more like a war zone than a place of worship. Pastor Magnum fired a round in the air.

"STAY OUT OF THE AISLES!!! STAY IN YOUR SEATS AND KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN!!!" It was the best advice he could give, and with all that was going on, the sanctuary was the safest place to be - at that time.

"Sister Stockman, get these kids outta here!!!" The Sunday school chief who was bloody from trying to help the wounded, followed the pastor's orders.

"CHILDREN, COME HERE, COME TO SISTER CARRIE!!!" she yelled. Most of the eight children still alive were paralyzed with fear, but their parents knew their children had to get out of the lead shower.

And then, tear gas was added to the equation.

Those who could, threw the smoking canisters back out the windows. As shooters inside the sanctuary fell, they were immediately replaced by other parishioners ... parishioners who never imagined they would be shooters on that cold Sunday morning.

As one of Noble's men fell, Gloria's cameraman crawled through the smoke to grab the AK-47 from the dead man's hand. He began to reload it with another magazine.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING???" Gloria screamed.

"STAY DOWN AND TRY TO FIND A WAY OUTTA HERE!!!" Raul Sanchez yelled.

Such is the heat of battle. Law, order, justice, and to some degree, reason is thrown out the window. The men outside were frantically shooting because they were ordered to. Hazardous duty pay, public relations and avenging their fallen comrades were their motivations.

On the inside, it was a totally different story. Most of them had helped build this church. Their entire families were inside. This was their home. To them, this was a matter of survival. For others inside, those who were just visiting, natural survival instincts took over. Gloria's Hispanic cameraman threw the AK to his shoulder and began firing out the window.

Belinda Browning, crawling with her three children, made her way to Sister Carrie, throwing two tear gas canisters back out the window en route.

"How are you going to get past the hallway, Sis?" Belinda asked.

"Are these all the kids?" Sister Carrie managed to ask, while trying to clear her throat and lungs of the gaseous air.

"I'll find the rest. Just stay down and be careful!!" pleaded Belinda. Belinda turned back to the chaos. Looking up from the floor she caught a glimpse of a woman sitting in a pew. It was Gloria McKnight.

"HEY, Sis! Don't just sit there! Help me find the rest of the kids!!"

Gloria didn't move. Frozen in panic and disbelief, tears streaming down her face, she couldn't take her eyes off her long time friend and fellow ACLU member, now frantically defending the sanctuary from the south wall. It was as if he was defending Gloria. Belinda tugged at Gloria's pant leg, yelling, "HEY SISTER!!"

Just then, a .223 hollow-pointed, soft lead round cracked from the barrel of a SWAT officer's MP5, hitting the cameraman just above his left eye. Belinda jerked her body across the aisle to avoid the falling corpse. Gloria, now covered with the blood and brain matter of her cameraman, jolted up, screaming hysterically.

Gloria McKnight had all the outward appearances of having just been filled with the Holy Ghost as she took to reeling in the aisle, flailing her hands, while hysterically screaming. Belinda saw that Gloria was directly in the line of fire. Belinda didn't think - she just reacted.

Browning reached up and slapped her so hard that her body made a resounding "thwack" as it made contact with the pew. Slowly, Gloria looked up into Belinda's eyes. There was nowhere to run, no safety, and Gloria McKnight instinctively knew it.

"IF YOU DON'T WANT THE SAME THING HAPPENING TO YOU, THEN STAY DOWN!" Belinda yelled. Belinda looked back to see Carrie Stockman leading seven more children out of the sanctuary.

"WE GOT WOUNDED IN HERE!!! WE NEED FIRST AID AND WE NEED IT NOW!!!" bellowed a man in the crowd.

Belinda looked over, crawling between the fourth and fifth rows of pews, to see a man tightly compressing a wound. Belinda looked at this man, her fellow militiaman... her brother, lying next to his wife who was not as badly wounded as he was.

"He's bleeding real bad, Sister Belinda!"

She grabbed his hand. "Hold on, Rocky! Don't you leave me!" Rocky, her brother had just enough air left in his pierced lung, to whisper.

"In the van... first aid kit...backpacks!"

"Forget it, girl" said a man, grabbing Belinda's arm. "We can't get out there."

"That's my BROTHER! Don't tell me what I can't do! You stay with 'im! I'll be back!" Belinda ran down the south aisle, tripping over spent casings on her way, catching up to Carrie and the children in the hallway that led to the main hallway.

"You okay?" Sister Carrie asked.

"It's not my blood, Sis! My brother's in there, hurt bad! I can barely breathe in there!"

"Youngins! Any more in there?"

"Didn't see any! Just Sister Roger's baby. Couldn't reach her though!"

The traumatized children were screaming for their parents. Kathy Dowden signaled from across the hall that the path was clear. The Siege at Liberty Baptist was 2 minutes, 30 seconds old.

Junior's men had secured the main hallway. Sister Carrie and the children had made it safely to the nursery. There, Terri and company had all of the children on the floor away from the windows. They were all covered in blankets, and no shots came through their south window. Yet.

The shooting continued, however at both ends of the hallway. In the middle, Belinda noticed her AR-15 under her dead militia buddy, Joe. She dove over to him, grabbed her rifle and ammo and threw the strap over her shoulder.

"GET IN HERE!!!" screamed Terri from the doorway of the nursery. Both were on their knees. Belinda grabbed Joe's Colt .45, slammed one of his full magazines in and slid it across the floor to Terri.

"Guard my kids for me!" and Belinda ran for the south door.

The helicopter, traveling about 150 feet east over 1-270 took a turn toward the south parking lot of the church. Its mission would be to lay down suppression fire over the south parking lot. Some of Junior's men were outside the south door, successfully sending local SWAT team #1 back over the guardrail.

"Four... no, five armed men, south side in view, commander."

"TAKE 'EM DOWN. You have the ball," the ATF SAC replied.

The fifth "man" was Belinda Browning. She ignored the warnings of those defending the south door and slithered out to reach two well-stocked backpacks in the trunk of her van. She had to stay low to avoid friendly fire from the sanctuary gunmen.

As she quickly opened the unlocked door to dive into her van, the helicopter corrected its course to a northwesterly direction and lowered its altitude to about 75 feet, moving at 40-mph.

"BLACK CHOPPER!!!" the south side security man yelled. The men in the upstairs window began shooting desperately at this newest threat. The safety was removed from the Browning Gattling gun, and the gunner squeezed the trigger.

The chopper wasn't black, but it made no difference. In a last act of defiance, the outside shooters joined in. Ricochet rounds could be seen bouncing off the rotary-wing craft. Belinda watched in horror from the front seat of her van as the windshields of other vehicles shattered. She quickly realized that her van had become a death trap.

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Chapter 1-h

The Call to Worship

Gloria, still traumatized, slowly walked over to the man holding Rocky's fatal wound. The man looked up and yelled, "GET DOWN, SISTER!!" But Gloria was incoherent. The man, a veteran who had seen combat, could see what was coming at him. He left his fallen friend and lunged forward, tackling Gloria to the pew. Gloria rolled over to the floor and stopped face up, just in time for her and the other 112 people in the sanctuary to be introduced to...

...the next level of terror.

Belinda dove to the rear of her van on top of the backpack, barely avoiding the fourteen .308 rounds that penetrated the front seat and the engine block.

The "small arms - anti-aircraft fire" from the ground caused Pilot Brad Johnson to increase the throttle when one of the rounds pierced his windshield. The jolt of the chopper caused his gunner to turn his weapon just slightly so that it aimed down at Old Jed's roof.

Suddenly, Hell's door was opened in the Sanctuary of God.

With what sounded like an 18-inch tree trunk going through a commercial tree shredder, and 10 times louder, holes began ripping open the ceiling from the southeast to the northwest, tearing pews - and people to shreds.

The panic then turned to chaotic pandemonium.

Pastor Magnum didn't take cover. As he saw the carnage take place, his mind immediately reverted back to his days in Vietnam. For a brief moment, Magnum wasn't a pastor - he was a soldier. He instinctively knew what had just happened, and like radar, he followed the sound of the helicopter overhead, his M-1 rifle clinched in his right hand.

He weaved through the panicking people and debris in the sanctuary as if they weren't there. As the chopper continued its northwesterly direction, Magnum turned into the access leading to the main hallway. He didn't hear the gunfire at the north doors. As the chopper began to make a 180-degree revolution over the golf course near by, Magnum's ears were locked on, to the rotor blades of his potential target. He turned with a dive onto the church office floor, not noticing his church secretary in a fetal position behind a file cabinet, hiding in fear.

As the chopper began heading back toward the church, Magnum stood up, taking cover against the wall next to the window, ignoring incoming gunfire from SWAT team #1. He checked to make sure he had a round in the chamber.

Agent Brad Johnson radioed down to Team #1 to take cover as the helicopter was going to make a pass over the north parking lot as a diversion. He checked in with his gunner. He had just over 260 rounds on his ammo belt. The pace of the battle was so quick that neither Johnson, nor his gunner Chuck Morgan, realized what they had fired on by mistake.

Nor could they know what was about to happen.

SWAT Team #1 held their fire and hid behind rocks along the golf course as the Bell helicopter approached the church at 85 mph heading southeast at about 75 feet off the ground. This gave Pastor Magnum the one and only opportunity he had.

Magnum swung around, threw his M-1 up to his right shoulder, and carefully fired all eight of his armor-piercing rounds at the ATF chopper, which was closing in at 500 feet.

When he saw the second of eight rounds ricochet off the base of the chopper, he adjusted his aim. He couldn't remember the rest. His gunfire attracted return rounds from SWAT team #1. Magnum dove for cover just as the last trace of glass was shot out of his office window and the magazine sprung out of its receiver. He listened with hopelessness as the chopper seemed to increase its speed, homing in, to finish off the anti-aircraft fire from below.

But the Bell helicopter did not fire. It continued on its path, losing altitude, and to the pastor's surprise, it passed right over Old Jed's roof.

What Magnum didn't know was that six of his eight shots fell true. Shot #3 hit the rotor blade of the chopper. Shots 4 and 5 shattered the windshield of the chopper, in front of the pilot.

Shots 6 and 8 did the most damage. One high velocity .30-06 round tore through Brad Johnson's heart, exited the pilot seat and lodged itself into the engine compartment. The fatal wound caused the ATF pilot to slump onto the stick, making the chopper go "full throttle" again. The eighth round went through the broken windshield and entered gunner Chuck Morgan's right shoulder blade at just the correct angle to tear his right arm off.

The Bell chopper headed toward its final resting place...

... the fast moving eastbound lanes of I-270.

"There're cops in front! On High Street!" Vicky screamed into the phone. Her racing heart could be heard in her voice.

"Got it! Now who are you?" Anita asked as her software finished loading.

"Vicky! Vicky Goldstein!"

Anita began to hear gunfire over the phone. Confused, she asked, "Vicky, are you okay? Are you at the church now?"

"No I'm at the...." The conversation was interrupted by an event that took everyone's attention away from the ongoing gunfire - a huge fireball followed by the ground-shaking shockwave from the freeway corridor.

"What the HELL was that???"

"Vicky? Vicky?? You there???" There was no response on the other end. All Anita could hear were the screams of panic - and more gunfire.

The most fierce gun battle was in front of the church. When the SWAT entry teams were all but neutralized at the north and south doorways, ATF and Sheriff backup personnel had jumped into 10 local police cruisers to lay cover fire into the church balcony where they saw at least five armed men. There were eight.

They parked the cruisers side by side, all pointing southwest on High Street for adequate cover. Twenty-two agents began jumping out of their vehicles on command and took cover. The weapons of choice: MP-5 and M-16 submachine guns. They were met by immediate fire from the balcony. Junior's men inside weren't taking any chances. Anyone not in the church was considered hostile.

Twenty-two sub-machine guns and a virtually unlimited amount of ammunition behind the cover of police cruisers should have been enough to overpower eight men behind a balcony window with three AK 47's, four shotguns, and one .30 caliber bolt action rifle. It wasn't.

The Joint task force was already taking on fire when the "go" signal was given. They began emptying magazines toward the balcony. They were good at working in sequence to maintain a constant barrage of firepower to keep their opponents heads down while tear gas canisters were launched. But they weren't disciplined in maintaining their "fields of fire." Instead of covering the entire balcony window they too often concentrated the fire at one spot.

The balcony shooters, led by Roger Hill, had the advantage of the higher position, allowing them to pick and choose their targets whenever they could get a clear shot. Hill ordered Junior's balcony men to maintain their fields of fire and carefully aim at the top of the cruisers. The AK 47's did their job. Two Sheriff's deputies went down but their injuries were minor due to their body armor.

Empty casings began to litter the ground beneath the feet of the law enforcement officers. Hill's balcony team took about ten seconds for the adrenaline rush of battle to begin taking effect. Even to law enforcement, shattering cruiser windshields and the sounds of steel-core ammo piercing car doors can be quite intimidating. But the Joint Task Force had plenty of firepower and kept it coming.

The heat of this battle was so intense that neither the ATF agents nor their commander had noticed Roger Hill's strategy. Roger, who had the bolt-action sniper rifle, carefully aimed for each of the cruiser's gas tanks while the rest of his team continued eliminating safe positions from which law enforcement agents could return fire.

When ATF agent Mike Weber, one of the few still in battle, slammed another fifty-round magazine into his HK 10mm, he began to smell something familiar. He had just put a round in the chamber when he realized he was kneeling in an expanding puddle of premium unleaded. His next thought was how far could he get from the cars, and how fast. He then felt the ground shake from the helicopter crash on I-270 when the battle of Liberty Baptist was just four minutes and ten seconds old.

Startled, Weber stood up between two cruisers, holding his HK in his right hand. With the huge fireball to his left catching his attention, he forgot his cover position. Roger Hill didn't. As a shotgun blast turned a windshield into fragments next to Weber, he spun around to avoid flying glass. This placed Weber's back in the cross-hairs of Roger Hill's .30 caliber hunting rifle.

"Eat this, you Nazi bastard!" Hill said as he squeezed the trigger. The fatal shot went through the vest of ATF agent Mike Weber, exploding his heart as it exited through the front. The force of the shot threw Weber's dead body onto the trunk lid of the Columbus Police cruiser, face forward. When his right hand landed on the trunk his trigger finger was locked on the trigger which fired all fifty 10mm rounds of his HK sub-machine gun...

... into the dining area of Bob Evans' restaurant across the street.

Terrified from the freeway blast, Vicky Goldstein dropped the pay phone. Racing back to her table, Vicky's only thought was of grabbing her coat and keys and getting out - fast.

Too late.

Exploding glass from the lead shower turned the Bob Evans' dining area into a kill zone. Goldstein was saved by some of the nineteen people who were pressed against the dining room windows, stunned by the I-270 fireball.

Their bullet-riddled bodies were scattered across table and floors. Vicky crawled under a table screaming and frozen in terror. The restaurant was in chaos.

And the news blackout was over.

"We interrupt this program for a WTVX special news report..."

This is Mark Jennings in the WTVX newsroom. Details are sketchy at this time, but what we do know is there has been a major shoot-out with police near High Street, just north of I-270 which has resulted in a fiery crash on the interstate. Paramedics are en route to the scene. We have unconfirmed reports of at least 3 fatalities on the eastbound lanes of I-270.

I-270 is backed up in both directions, as is High Street.

Once again details are sketchy and..., wait a....

Uh, we now know that the shoot-out is ongoing and is taking place at a building on the north end with police. There appears to be casualties at the

What?

Ok. We now go live to Beverly Jones in the WTVX traffic copter..."

(With the sounds of helicopter blades in the background, there was a sense of nervousness in her voice...)

"Mark, this is Beverly! We have just been radioed out of the area! I think they were shooting at us! They were shooting at us!"

"Uh, Beverly could you give a...."

"Mark, there is an inferno on I-270, eastbound just before the High Street bridge. Emergency vehicles are trying to get through! Traffic is not moving, and there are people getting out of their cars trying to help the injured. Do not use 270!! Repeat; avoid using the north section of 270. Use, ah... Route 161 as a bypass!"

"Bev, this is Mark in the newsroom! We have reporters on the way! What is going on up there???"

"The shots are coming from a church! When we passed by, I think we saw SWAT team members on the ground. There was blood! The police have closed...."

"Beverly..."

(She cut Mark off again)

"It looks like the police are trying to get to the wounded, and everybody's still shooting!! People, please stay off High Street!! Use Lazelle Road as a detour!!"

"Beverly, we're receiving reports of shots being fired in a restaurant in that area. Are you sure this shoot-out is at a church??"

"Dammit! I'm watching police shooting into a church right now!! I don't know about a restaurant...Ok, ok, Speed! Take her up!! We're getting to safer distance! It looks like a war zone up here!! (News chopper pilot, Andy "Speed" Turner was forced to increase altitude.)

"Again, avoid the 270 - High Street interchange on the north end. If you see emergency vehicles or Fire Rescue, please let them through....Oh my god! Oh my god!!!"

"Beverly, Beverly!! Are you okay up there???"

(There was a pause and a crackling in the radio)

"A row of police cars just exploded!!!"

The newsroom then cut Beverly Jones off the air. Mark Jennings calmly reported:

"We do not have a statement from police but we are told that one is forthcoming. More details as they become available. Again, 270 is closed now between I-71 and Route 315. High Street is closed between Wilson Bridge and Lazelle Rd. There appears to be a shoot-out in progress in that area.

This has been an exclusive special report on WTVX news radio...."

Anita stood up, stunned but not surprised at what she had just heard. She put a VCR tape on "record" and then put the television on the local channel that was not showing football games that day. She knew that a story like this was soon to receive live TV coverage. She quickly checked the cassette to make sure she was taping the radio program.

With her software program loaded, Anita regained enough composure to pick up the fax phone and leave a message on her own voice mail:

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. REPEAT, THIS IS AN EMERGENCY...

WE HAVE A HOSTILE SITUATION AT LIBERTY BELL BAPTIST IN FRANKLIN COUNTY...

THERE HAVE BEEN CASUALTIES. REPEAT, THERE HAVE BEEN CASUALTIES. PLEASE REPORT TO YOUR PERSONNEL OFFICER AT ONCE AND PREPARE FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS... THIS IS NOT A DRILL. REPEAT, THIS IS NOT A DRILL. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. THIS IS ANITA PRESTON. THE TIME IS 11:15

Anita tried to stay calm and remember what her husband did during the alert drills they used to practice. She found the police scanner in the closet, plugged it into a micro-cassette recorder with a jumper wire, and started recording. She couldn't find the correct frequencies for monitoring until she noticed an emergency instruction sheet on the back of the scanner.

Jay Preston, where are you? Dear God, people are dying up there! Anita thought to herself.

Since Vicky Goldstein never hung up the phone at Bob Evans, Anita was also recording the chaos in the restaurant, as all phone calls into "Citizens' Action Network" were recorded. This served as the most important information that Anita Preston would receive that day.

Knowing her husband's pager was out of range, she began to type the exact same message she had spoken for the CAN-DO Internet list. As she began to hear the "flash traffic" on the police scanner calling for backup units, a tear began to flow down her left cheek. She realized that she might never see some of her friends ever again.

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Cracking the Liberty Bell

Chapter 1-i

The Call To Worship

"DADDY, YOU ALL RIGHT???"

"STAY DOWN JUNIOR!!! WHERE'S THAT CHOPPER???"

Junior hit the floor. "I think it went down over the freeway! Where's Gretchen??"

"She's behind the file cabinet. We gotta get the women folk downstairs!" The pastor was almost hyperventilating.

"Ain't movin' anyone while they're still shootin'! We gotta fire out front."

"In the church???"

"Outside. Brother Hill says he lost one man on the balcony, but he's got em' retreatin'!"

"Where's yer Mama???"

"I don't know if she got out with the little ones. They're all in the nursery! Sam and Ronnie's got the back covered. But we need more guns, Daddy!!"

The gunfight had been reduced to the north parking lot. SWAT team #2 on the freeway entrance stopped shooting after the helicopter crashed about 200 feet behind them. Junior received his reports via the two-way radios but he could barely hear reports from the sanctuary. There were still too many people screaming.

Pastor Magnum crawled back to his bullet-riddled office doorway. Junior ordered two gunmen from the south upstairs doorway to the north to keep SWAT team #1 behind the rocks. They both grabbed Gretchen King, the Church's secretary, dragging her out of the office. Gretchen's fear made her speechless and unable to move on her own. She was in an office that had been hit with over 300 rounds of ammunition.

Incoming gunfire from the north door pinned the pastor, his son and the secretary at the entrance to the main hallway. Although they couldn't go any further, Magnum's presence inspired the shooters defending the hallway. Three more members of SWAT team #1 were wounded before their guns fell silent.

In the sanctuary, after hearing the guns go silent on the south side momentarily, Gloria McKnight did what her instincts – and Raoul had told her to do: Get out! She went the only way she knew - out the sanctuary through the south hallway and out the door. She saw Tanya Rogers holding her young child tightly, standing still as if she was unaware of what was going on around her. In the middle of the church aisle, Tanya was in shock and her child was screaming. The two-month-old child had a small cut on one of her legs from flying glass.

Frantically, Gloria jumped over the dead and wounded, grabbing Tanya in an attempt to lead her to safety out the south door. "C'mon, honey! Let's get your baby some help!"

"Get her down, sister!!" yelled one of the men in the sanctuary who was helping a wounded child.

"I've gotta get outta here!" Gloria yelled back.

She tugged at Tanya's arms to help her crawl to safety. Tanya began wailing and calling for her husband, since she didn't know he was already dead. Then someone dove on both Tanya, and Gloria, putting them to floor. Gloria, thinking about two-month-old Darla in Tanya's arms, was able to wrestle little Darla away from Tanya on the way to the floor. More shots could be heard coming from the south parking lot. Gloria held the only child left in the sanctuary in her arms.

"GET ME OUTTA HERE!!!" Gloria screamed. In the midst of all the noise in the sanctuary, she heard a familiar voice outside.

"I need some cover fire out here!" It was Belinda Browning in the south parking lot, pinned between bullet-riddled cars. The shooters along the south wall responded. Since the men covering the upstairs south hallway had been moved to cover the north side, the south wall men were shorthanded. As more tear gas entered the sanctuary, the unidentified man, Gloria, and Tanya, had to make their move. Gloria knew that by taking Tanya's newborn, Tanya would follow. The southern hallway exit was no longer an option. The constant reports from rifles on the south side sent a clear message. Gloria assumed that the woman who had just saved her life had just died in a hail of gunfire. *Nobody could have survived that*, she thought.

The man told Gloria he knew the way to a safe place. They began crawling quickly to the front church aisle, Gloria holding little Darla who was screaming in pain, and the unidentified man holding Tanya, keeping her from standing to run after her baby.

As they turned the corner for the north hallway, shots began entering the chapel area. SWAT team #1 became even more belligerent in its assault. Panic-stricken, Gloria left her lowered position to get into the north hallway access. The man couldn't hold Tanya back any longer. Tanya broke free, calling for her husband and ran after Gloria.

After making it safely to the hallway access, Tanya grabbed her child back from Gloria. Unknown to both of them, they passed by their only doorway to safety. The unidentified man never made it to the hallway. When he tried to stop Tanya from standing up, he took two shots to the head from the automatic weapons fire from SWAT team #1. He was killed instantly. Gloria and Tanya Rogers were trapped in the north hallway access between the main hallway and the sanctuary. Both areas were taking heavy gunfire in the haze of tear gas.

In the midst of the south side firefight, Belinda had made it to the second car from the south door. She had managed to grab two fully-loaded backpacks and her husband's 12-gauge Mossberg shotgun. Three more helicopters could be heard overhead. One was a TV news helicopter which was being forced away by two other local police choppers. All three kept safe distances out of range of the shooters in the church. Belinda saw the chance to move.

She slowly dragged the backpacks to the next car. Browning, with the AR-15 still slung over her shoulder, kept down, shielding her face from windshield glass and the shrapnel produced from bullet rounds hitting the brick walls of the church.

The SWAT team #2 commander had come out of his command unit to join his men under siege. He saw the opportunity to bring this standoff to a quick end. He ordered his men to gain entry into the south doorway by laying cover fire with smoke and lead as a diversion, while three of his remaining men would assault the doorway. He would take advantage of the fact that the church was now severely undermanned.

SWAT team #2's first objective was successful. Belinda Browning watched in horror as the four remaining defenders of the south doorway were killed by the relentless gunfire that Gloria heard. When Belinda saw the flash grenade explode in the doorway and no one move, she knew that she, and anyone in the main hallway, were also soon to perish. In her mind, visions of church picnics with her children and husband, Sam were quickly replaced with the vision of her brother dying in the sanctuary.

The men were ordered to take the south entrance. Two men had suppressed HK 10-mm's with laser sights. They were led by the third, who had a black, sawed-off shotgun, and was holding a shield marked "POLICE" on the front. Moving quickly, the men were fifteen feet from the door. *I'm trapped! No escape!* Belinda thought.

SWAT team #1's commander on the north side had also joined the fight. One of his men, Lance Taylor had just lost his partner to a fatal head wound. They were still taking on fire. Taylor was taking cover behind the rock when his commander crawled over to him.

"He's dead, sergeant. I'm sorry," said the Lieutenant.

"I was at his house last night, sir. He's got kids!" Taylor replied .

"Hang in there, son. We got wounded out here. They got kids too. Just hold on...."

"Those fucking bastards will pay for this, I swear!" Taylor's remorse turned to revenge.

"Chill, son. Just stand by." Lieutenant Nelson Richards then had to do what some would have called the *unthinkable*.

"Alpha to SWAT COM! Alpha to SWAT COM!!!"

There was no immediate answer. The chaos at the ATF/Columbus Police command & control unit was overwhelming.

"Alpha to SWAT COM!!! CALL OFF THE ASSAULT! REPEAT, CALL OFF THE ASSAULT!!!"

His radio crackled back. "ALPHA... Maintain your positions." *What??* Richards thought. It was a voice he didn't recognize.

"Dammit, I got dead and wounded men out here!!!" he screamed back in to his radio. There was no reply. During the short time he was on the radio, he wasn't watching the distraught and enraged Sergeant.

In the one scene of the siege that was seen on television sets around the world later, a shotgun blast rang out from underneath the damaged vehicle from next to the south hallway doors. The man in black holding the shield buckled to his knees when the #4 shots tore through his boot, tearing the flesh away from his ankle. As he dropped the shield, Belinda threw one of the backpacks in the south doorway. That caught assault man #1 and #2's attention...

That was the diversion Mrs. Belinda Browning needed.

The news chopper above caught the video of a thirty-four year old mother of three. The five-foot, six-inch woman with blonde hair, olive drab pants to match her winter jacket, with a backpack and a Colt AR-15 over her shoulder, was seen rolling out from a cover position in front of the vehicle next to the door catching everyone from SWAT team #2 by surprise. From a kneeling position, she began firing a continuous volley from Mr. Browning's Mossberg 500 at the oncoming assault team. All three men were seen falling to the ground with blood flying from their bodies as Belinda backed in to the south door. As she tripped over the other dead bodies in the doorway she grabbed the other backpack and took cover behind a wall inside. She was shaking, in tears, and her heart was racing. She was wondering what she had just done.

Belinda Browning's second worst nightmare came true. She had just shot three men.

The renewed gunfire from the south put Tanya into total hysteria. With little Darla in her arms, the twenty-two year-old mother ran into the hallway heading for the north door, calling for her deceased husband. Gloria was right behind them.

Pastor Magnum, still huddled on the edge of the opposite hallway access, saw that this trio was about to make a fatal mistake. He jumped up to stop Tanya from running outside into a kill zone with her newborn child. He landed on Gloria McKnight instead.

Tanya Rogers, ignoring the screams from the north hallway men ran outside, still calling for her husband Jimmie. All the Pastor, his son, and Gloria could do was watch.

Joe Winston was keeping SWAT team #1 in check at the north doorway. Tanya's exit caught his right eye. As he turned to see her in the parking lot, he realized that Tanya was walking right into Sergeant Lance Taylor's range.

Sergeant Lance W. Taylor never looked to see who or what he was shooting. In his rage, he raised from behind the rocks and emptied the 30-round magazine of his MP-5 at the north doorway. By the time Lieutenant Richards or anyone else realized what had happened, it was too late.

22 year-old Tanya Rogers, and two-month-old Darla, both lay dead in the north parking lot... about ten feet away from Jimmie Rogers.

All shooting stopped.

"SWAT COM to All Units... Hold fire. Repeat: Hold Fire. Check Weapons... Alpha report..." There was pause. "Alpha, Report!!"

"This is Alpha. They... they just shot a woman and a baby for trying to leave. Son-of-a-Bitch! They just killed two of their own!"

"Copy, Alpha. Stand by..."

The Pastor didn't hear the lie that had just been reported. But he and the others on the north side had just witnessed cold-blooded murder. There was fire in Magnum's eyes. He let go of Gloria, looked at his son Junior, and said through clinched teeth: "Get these women and children downstairs- **NOW!**"

As the siege was in its eleventh minute, Anita Preston had a program known as "Redi-Page" on her computer screen. This program could page up to five hundred people at one time. She typed in the voice mail number on which she had left the emergency message, followed by 911.

She selected the group called "State list." When she hit the "ENTER" key, this software program began dialing the pager numbers of sixty-four people spread across Ohio.

Within seconds, the voice mail number with a "911" code would be on the pagers of sixty-four communications officers of the Ohio Citizens Militia.

End of Chapter One



Chapter Two



Contents